COL. COLL.
LIBRARY
N YORK.

THE AERONAUT.

No. 27. April 4. 1817

The love where death has set his seal,
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
Nor falsehood disavow.
LORD BYRON.

To the Editors of the Aeronaut.

Gentlemen.

Observing in one of your former numbers a dissertation upon matrimony, in which you depicted its blessings & its happiness, I thought I could not employ my time amiss, in sending you the simple narration of a short life, which exhibits "an affecting reverse of the picture," too sad almost for reality.

I write from the pillow of sickness, from the couch where I fear death has entered; and if the sorrows of a heart, broken by disappointment, and stung by adversity, can be in any way acceptable, you will not heritate to insert it.

I am yet a young man. Four and twenty summers have scarcely past over my head. It were useless to recall the early incidents of my life. They contain nothing worthy of mention. They were as usual the continued round of boyish pleasures, & boyish disappointments. I therefore hasten to that period of my life, when my sorrows began which threw the night-shade of misery over my days, and stretched me on this bed of hopeless agony.

When I had attained the age of twenty ~~eighteen~~, business required my presence at Boston. As yet my heart was untouched by the darts of love. I had had indeed many of those childish attachments, which arise & fade away in early youth, but no permanent one. Accident introduced me to the acquaintance of a young lady, within a few miles of Boston. I had often indulged myself in speculations on female excellence; I had formed to myself ideas of beauty, which I hardly expected ever to behold realised; I had mused on the character of the woman whom I should wish to be my wife, but came to the conclusion, that human nature could not produce the representation of my thoughts, and therefore little

expected ever to experience that happiness you have so warmly insisted on. But here, all my thoughts, my speculations, my glowing anticipations, were at once forgotten. There was in Mary a charm which I cannot define, without regular beauty, her features made that impression on my heart, which was destined never to be effaced. When she spoke, the faint flush of modesty & of animation gave double ~~x~~ brilliancy to the polish of her cheek, & the lustre of her eye. I gazed upon her, as if she had been some superior being. To shorten the story, I became ardently attached to her. I prolonged my stay in Boston some time; my addresses were favorably received on her part,

and as my father held a high station in the commercial world, her relations deeming it a suitable match, gave their immediate consent.

I found the stores of her mind & the quickness of her genius fully equal to the charms of her person. I delighted to converse with her, & always arose instructed and improved. I felicitated myself on the future possession of a woman superior to any I had ever seen; who was to prove the greatest treasure that earth could afford, and to smooth my journey through life with every attraction & every endearing tie.

During one of my visits to her residence, I suddenly received a letter from my father, requiring my immediate presence home. I

hastened with palpitating heart to my native place; when, you may easily judge of my consternation, I found my father on the verge of bankruptcy, having experienced such severe losses at sea, that he scarcely knew how much longer to calculate on holding his station. It was necessary for me to proceed immediately to the southward to retrieve in some measure his affairs, & I accordingly set sail, after having written an affectionate letter to my Mary, assuring her of my return, & of my continued love.

Great as was my sorrow, hope enlivened my voyage. My return, I thought could not be long distant, & I was without doubt, that my father's affairs were not

beyond recovery. The image of Mary and happiness was forever before mine eyes. Her form shed lustre on my dreams, & gladness on my waking thoughts. But we had not proceeded far along the coast of Florida, before adverse winds arose, & threatened us with destruction. By continued toil, we succeeded in getting in the gulf of Mexico; but the weather still continuing unfavorable, one dark & dreadful night, we were driven over shelving rocks upon a wild & desolate shore. I will not attempt to describe the horrors of that hour. When morning broke, we were stranded upon a beach, near which few signs of vegetation appeared; & after we had succeeded with

great difficulty in effecting a safe landing, we gazed upon one another with that terrible despair in our looks, which seemed to wish that death rather than life had been our portion.

We travelled in a body into the interior, where at last we found woods, whose scanty fruits awhile supported nature. But cold & lingering fatigue reduced our number daily; & the four of us that were left, fell into the hands of savages; where, being separated from each other, we had no means of communicating & I have never seen or heard of my companions since.

I was destined to be tortured to death. No entreaties could prevail with these relentless monsters to

spare my life, and I at length resigned myself to stupid apathy. One evening, a few hours previous to the time appointed for my destruction, I lay, bound, in solitary silence, musing over my fate. In the hollow murmurs of the grove, I fancied I heard the voice of Mary come with a sad and mournful wail; it was only fancy, but the sound went to my heart. In the pale shroudings of the moon, my distempered imagination beheld her lovely form, sad, wan, & uncouthly. I gazed till all was darkness. A strange stupor seemed to have seized my faculties. Dreams wild & frenzied, cost my brain in that dreadful sleep. When I awoke, the faint glimmerings of

morn reminded me where I was. I remembered my doom; but was surprised to behold the hour appointed for it past by. As I lay pondering, a female form suddenly appeared beside me. It was an Indian woman; her hands were stained with blood, her hair & her garments all dishevelled. "Fly" — said she — "your enemies are at rest. Ask no questions. Go, and the Great Spirit bear thee over our mountains to thy home." She gave me provisions, & kissing her hand in gratitude, I departed. After many weeks of toil, of danger, & of difficulty, I at length reached a sea port in the United States, where I procured a passage to my native city. I past the whole time in a strange & unaccountable

state. A gloom hung over my spirits which I could not shake off, and when the dark blue land at last appeared which was to bound my voyage, I felt a sinking in my heart, which seemed almost to threaten my existence.

I at last landed. I proceeded home; but alas! "nor friends, nor sacred home," was I ever more to behold. — But let me go on. In the house I had ever lived, strangers had their abode. I enquired further — My father was dead! — Had I then asked the reason, I should have been told that he died of a broken heart. But I heard no more. For weeks & months I raved in the agony of delirium.

Health at last was restored, & consciousness again lit my brain. When I had visited my father's grave, when I had calmed the

tumult of my grief, I proceeded to Boston. There at least I hoped to find a balm for my woes.

I arived at the house where I had so often been delighted. I announced myself; but was healed as an impudent impostor, & turned away from the door. I supposed that suffering and anguish had altered my appearance; & I bore all this with calmness. I then sought a friend I once had in Boston. He recognised me; but I could perceive by the mournful face he assumed, when I told him my story, that all was not right. I demanded to hear the worst.

He told me, that when Mary's relations heard of my father's loss, their mercenary spirit immediately began to discourage the match.

But she remained constant; and it was not till after certain news had been received of the loss of the vessel in which I had sailed, & the supposed destruction of the crew; it was not till hope had died away, & menaces & threats had too powerful an effect upon a frame emaciated & brought almost to the grave, that she was prevailed upon, or rather forced to bestow her unwilling hand upon a man, whose only merit consisted in his wealth, & who after a short career of cruel behaviour to her, & open profligacy, died in a state of intoxication. In a state of partial derangement, she had refused to return to her friends, & my friend was ignorant of her present situation.

I listened with an unnatural calmness till he concluded. But when he had ceased, a fire sprung up in my brain, which I could not control. I burst from his presence, & proceeding immediately to the house from which I had been so rudely driven, I rushed into the presence of her relatives. When I came there, I know scarcely what I did. I faintly remember that a supernatural eloquence seemed to be suddenly acquired by me. I saw them shrink while I spoke; but their answer was a malicious laugh. My fury then knew no bounds, & I know not what my temporary insanity might not have effected, had they not again caused me to be forcibly removed from the house.

I wandered up & down the woods & lanes of the country, & the

streets of the town, without any definite consciousness of where and what I was. I only knew I was wretched. I only knew I had been betrayed & barbarously treated. As I past along a narrow lane, I heard a shriek from an upper window. The voice was Mary's. It vibrated to my heart, & recalled a momentary consciousness; but heeding it only as a sport of imagination, I past on.

The next day, as I was sitting, I believe, in a small inn near the town, with my head bent upon my hands, I thought I heard a feeble voice pronounce my name, & felt a gentle pressure on my arm. I started from my seat. There was indeed a form before me, and that form was Mary's; but oh! how different from what I last

beheld her, in the bloom and brightness of her beauty! I passed my hand across my eyes to be convinced that all was a reality. A full sense of my situation at once awoke. Rea resumed her empire, only to feel the redoubled horror of my soul —"Mary!" said I — "is it you?" — She answered not, but hid her face in my hand. "Mary!" — I repeated again. — She looked up. "Yes," she said, "it is Mary; from what cavern of ocean art thou come to bless me!" —"Talk not thus wildly, my love," I replied — "happiness may yet bloom upon us." She shook her head. "No, no" — she said mourn "my race is almost run. The day is gone — the night is at hand. My eyes have seen thee, and I can die in peace. They tore me from happiness — and life shall

cease ere long, my love, to throb." — I spoke of hope. "Hope", she said, "has long since died; life flows feebly in these veins;" — and she laid my hand upon her cold & icy wrist. At length returning reason beamed upon her soul. She rose more lovely to my eyes than ever. Pale & unearthly, she looked like a seraph rising from the dust of mortality & contamination. She spoke of her past life; of her wild & frenzied existence since she had been forced to marry a man whom she abhorred. She had lived since his death in dependance upon the bounty of others. Those whom she mingled with were alike ignorant of her origin & her history; she only claimed their compassion & their shelter, & they afforded it.

As she spoke, a hectic flush came upon her cheek, which I interpreted in her favor, but which was only in

reality the signs of approaching dissolution. She sunk on a chair; her eyes beamed brighter than ever; the lovely crimson suffused her countenance; she threw her arms around my neck, & with one convulsive effort exclaiming, "Farewell" her hands relapsed their hold, & when I turned to support her, her spirit had fled forever.

I knelt beside the cold & inanimate body of her I had so dearly loved in life. I wept over the pale & blighted flower, which three short years ago, had bloomed in matchless beauty. All, alas! was gone. Mary was no more, & life seemed drearier than ever.

My friend who had been in pursuit of me, came in at this awful moment. The scene was too affecting to be misunderstood; but when the first burst of his surprise &

grief was over, though his care, I was removed from the body, over which I had fallen insensible; the lovely remains were consigned to their native dust in silence & obscurity. Often have I burst from my couch of sickness, to weep upon her grave. Often have I spent the livelong night in mourning upon the sod that sleeps above her.

Life is almost extinct. I shall soon cease to be on earth. On this bed of languishing, however, have I learnt to look to heaven. The pulse that once rioted in my veins, is feeble now & almost cold; but my broken heart can feel that balm which heaven alone can give. A few short days, perhaps hours, and I shall slumber with my Mary. Oh! may I meet her in that blessed realm, where woe

and disappointment shall rend his
heart no more, where joy and
gladness shall reign ~~forever~~ mutually, &
sorrow & sighing shall flee away.

I am, &c

AURELIUS.

E.